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POPE PIUS XI

VENERABLE BRETHREN AND BELOVED CHILDREN

HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BLESSING

FORTY years have elapsed since the incomparable Encyclical of Leo XIII of happy memory, *Rerum novarum*, first saw the light. The whole Catholic world gratefully recalls the event, and prepares to celebrate it with befitting solemnity.

The way for this remarkable document of pastoral solicitude, it is true, had been in a measure prepared by other pronouncements of Our Predecessor. His Letters on the foundation of human society, the family, and the holy Sacrament of matrimony,¹ on the origin of civil power² and its proper co-ordination with the Church,³ on the chief duties of Christian citizens,⁴ against the tenets of Socialism⁵ and the false notions of human liberty,⁶ these and others of the kind had unmistakably revealed the mind of Leo XIII. *Rerum novarum*, however, stood out in this, that it laid down for all mankind unerring rules for the right solution of the difficult problem of human solidarity, called the Social Question, at the very time when such guidance was most opportune and necessary.

¹ Encycl. *Arcanum*, February 10, 1880.

² Encycl. *Diuturnum*, June 29, 1881.

³ Encycl. *Immortale Dei*, November 1, 1885.

⁴ Encycl. *Sapientiae Christianae*, January 10, 1890.

⁵ Encycl. *Quod apostolici muneris*, December 28, 1878.

⁶ Encycl. *Libertas*, June 20, 1888.

Occasi

Towards the close of the nineteenth century the new economic methods and the new development of industry had sprung into being in almost all civilized nations, and had made such headway that human society appeared more and more divided into two classes. The first, small in numbers, enjoyed practically all the comforts so plentifully supplied by modern invention ; the second class, comprising the immense multitude of workingmen, was made up of those who, oppressed by dire poverty, struggled in vain to escape from the straits which encompassed them.

This state of things was quite satisfactory to the wealthy, who looked upon it as the consequence of inevitable and natural economic laws, and who therefore were content to abandon to charity alone the full care of relieving the unfortunate ; as though it were the task of charity to make amends for the open violation of justice, a violation not merely tolerated, but sanctioned at times by legislators. On the other hand, the working classes, victims of these harsh conditions, submitted to them with extreme reluctance, and became more and more unwilling to bear the galling yoke. Some, carried away by the heat of evil counsels, went so far as to seek the disruption of the whole social fabric. Others, whom a solid Christian training restrained from such misguided excesses, convinced themselves nevertheless that there was much in all this that needed a radical and speedy reform.

Such also was the opinion of many Catholics, priests and laymen, who with admirable charity had long devoted themselves to relieving the undeserved misery of the labouring classes, and who could not persuade

themselves that so radical and unjust a distinction in the distribution of temporal goods was quite in harmony with the designs of an Allwise Creator.

They therefore sought in all sincerity a remedy against the lamentable disorder already existing in society, and a firm barrier against worse dangers to come. But such is the infirmity of even the best minds, that these men either found themselves repelled as dangerous innovators, or opposed by fellow-workers in the same cause, who held views different from theirs; and thus wavering in uncertainty, they did not, under the circumstances, know which way to turn.

In this grave conflict of opinions, accompanied by discussions not always of a peaceful nature, the eyes of all, as often in the past, turned towards the Chair of Peter, that sacred depository of all truth whence words of salvation are dispensed to the whole world. To the feet of Christ's Vicar on earth were seen to flock, in unprecedented numbers, sociological students, employers, the very workingmen themselves, begging with one voice that at last a safe road might be pointed out to them.

Long did the prudent Pontiff consider the matter before God, seeking the advice of the most experienced counsellors available, and carefully weighing the reasons for and against. At last, "urged by the responsibility of the Apostolic Office,"⁷ and lest by keeping silence he should seem to neglect his duty,⁸ he decided in virtue of the divine magisterium committed to him, to address himself to the Universal Church of Christ, nay, to the whole human race.

⁷ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 1.

⁸ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 13.

On May 15th, 1891, therefore, the long-desired message was given to the world. Undaunted by the difficulty of the undertaking or by the weight of years, with unbending courage, the venerable Pontiff taught mankind new methods of approach to social problems.

Chief headings

You know, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, you know full well the admirable teaching which has made the Encyclical *Rerum novarum* for ever memorable. In this document the Supreme Shepherd, grieving for "the misery and wretchedness pressing unjustly" on such a large proportion of mankind, boldly took in his own hands the cause of workingmen, "surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hard-heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition."⁹ He sought help neither from Liberalism nor Socialism; the former had already shown its utter impotence to find a right solution of the social question, while the latter would have exposed human society to still graver dangers by offering a remedy much more disastrous than the evil it designed to cure.

The Sovereign Pontiff approached the subject in the exercise of his manifest rights, deeply conscious that he was the chief guardian of religion and the chief dispenser of all that closely appertains to it; for the question at issue was one to which "no solution could be found apart from the intervention of religion and of the Church."¹⁰ Basing his doctrine solely upon the unchangeable principles drawn from right reason and divine revelation, he indicated and proclaimed with

⁹ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 2.

¹⁰ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 13

confidence and "as one having power,"¹¹ "the relative rights and mutual duties of the rich and of the poor, of Capital and of Labour,"¹² and at the same time the part that was to be taken by the Church, by the State and by the persons immediately concerned.

Nor was the Apostolic voice raised in vain. It was listened to with genuine admiration and greeted with profound sympathy not only by the loyal children of the Church, but by many also who had wandered far from the truth and from the unity of faith; nay more, by well nigh every one who, either as private student or as legislator, was thereafter interested in social and economic questions.

With particular enthusiasm was the Pontifical Letter welcomed by Christian workingmen, who felt themselves vindicated and defended by the highest authority on earth, and by all those devoted men whose concern it had long been to better the conditions of Labour, and who heretofore had found nothing but general indifference, not to say unfriendly suspicion, or even open hostility. All these men have ever deservedly held the Encyclical in the highest esteem, to the extent of solemnizing its memory in various ways year after year throughout the world in token of gratitude.

Despite this widespread agreement, however, some minds were not a little disturbed, with the result that the noble and exalted teaching of Leo XIII, quite novel to worldly ears, was looked upon with suspicion by some, even amongst Catholics, and gave offence to others. For it boldly attacked and overthrew the idols of Liberalism, swept aside inveterate prejudices, and

¹¹ MATT., VII, 29.

¹² Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 1.

was so far and so unexpectedly in advance of its time, that the slow of heart ridiculed the study of the new social philosophy, and the timid feared to scale its lofty heights. Nor were there wanting those who, while professing their admiration for this message of light, regarded it as a utopian ideal, desirable rather than attainable in practice.

The scope of the present Encyclical

And now that the solemn commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum novarum* is being enthusiastically celebrated in every country, but particularly in the Holy City, to which Catholic workingmen are gathering from all sides, We deem it opportune, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, first, to recall the great benefits which this Encyclical has brought to the Catholic Church and to the world at large ; secondly, to vindicate the social and economic doctrine of so great a Master against certain doubts which have arisen, and to develop more fully some of its points ; finally, after arraigning modern economics and examining the nature of Socialism, to expose the root of the present social disorder, and to point out the only salutary cure, a reform of Christian morals. Such are the three topics to the treatment of which the present Letter is dedicated.

I

BENEFITS DUE TO THE ENCYCLICAL

Beginning, then, with the topic We have mentioned first, We cannot refrain from paying to Almighty God the tribute of Our earnest gratitude for the benefits which have come from the Encyclical of Leo XIII.

For We remember the counsel of St. Ambrose : " No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks."¹³ Were We to enumerate these benefits even in a cursory way, it would be necessary to recall almost the whole social history of the past forty years. We may summarize them conveniently under three heads, corresponding to the three forms of intervention for which Our Predecessor pleaded in order to bring about his great work of reconstruction.

1—What was done by the Church

In the first place, Leo himself clearly stated what could be expected from the Church : " The Church insists, on the authority of the Gospel, upon those teachings whereby the conflict can be brought to an end, or rendered, at least, far less bitter ; the Church uses her efforts not only to enlighten the mind, but to direct by her precepts the life and conduct of each and all ; the Church improves and betters the condition of the workingman by means of numerous organizations."¹⁴

In doctrinal matters

This mighty power for good, the Church did not suffer to remain unprofitably stored away, but drew upon it freely in the cause of a peace that was so universally desired. Time and again the social and economic doctrine of the Encyclical *Rerum novarum* was proclaimed and emphasized in spoken and written word by Leo XIII himself and by his Successors, who were ever careful to adapt it to the changing conditions of the times, and who never relaxed their

¹³ St. AMBROSE, on the passing of his brother Satyrus, Book I, Chap. 44.

¹⁴ Encycl *Rerum novarum* § 13.

paternal solicitude and pastoral constancy, particularly in defence of the poor and of the weak.¹⁵ With like zeal and erudition did numerous Bishops of the Catholic world interpret and comment upon this doctrine, and apply it, according to the mind and instructions of the Holy See, to the special circumstances of the various nations.¹⁶

It is not surprising, therefore, that under the teaching and guidance of the Church, many learned priests and laymen earnestly devoted themselves to the problem of elaborating social and economic science in accordance with the conditions of our age, for the chief purpose of adapting to modern needs the unchanging and unchangeable doctrine of the Church.

Under the guidance and in the light of Leo's Encyclical was thus evolved a truly Christian social science, which continues to be fostered and enriched daily by the tireless labours of those picked men whom We have named the auxiliaries of the Church. They do not allow it to remain hidden in learned obscurity, but bring it forth into the full view of public life, as is clearly shown by the valuable and well-frequented courses founded in Catholic universities, academies, and seminaries; by social congresses and "weeks" held at frequent intervals and with gratifying success; by study circles; by sound and timely publications spread far and wide.

¹⁵ We give a few references only: LEO XIII, Litt. Apost. *Praeclara*, June 20, 1894; Encycl. *Graves de communi*, January 18, 1901.—PIUS X, Motu proprio *De Actione populari Christiana*, December 8, 1903.—BENEDICT XV, Encycl. *Ad Beatissimi*, November 1, 1914.—PIUS XI, Encycl. *Ubi Arcano*, December 23, 1922; Encycl. *Rile expiatis*, April 30, 1926.

¹⁶ Cf. *La Hierarchie catholique et le Problème social depuis l'encyclique "Rerum novarum," 1891-1931*, pp. xvi-335: "Union Internationale d'Etudes Sociales fondée à Malines, en 1920, sous la présidence du Card. Mercier." Paris, Editions "Spes," 1931.

Nor were these the only blessings which followed from the Encyclical. The doctrine of *Rerum novarum* began little by little to penetrate among those also who, being outside Catholic unity, do not recognize the authority of the Church; and thus Catholic principles of sociology gradually became part of the intellectual heritage of the whole human race. Thus too We rejoice that the Catholic truths proclaimed so vigorously by Our illustrious Predecessor, are advanced and advocated, not merely in non-Catholic books and journals, but frequently also in legislative assemblies and in courts of justice.

Moreover, when after the Great War the rulers of the leading nations wished to restore peace by an entire reform of social conditions, and among other measures drew up principles to regulate the just rights of Labour, many of their conclusions agreed so perfectly with the principles and warnings of Leo XIII, as to seem expressly deduced from them. The Encyclical *Rerum novarum* has become in truth a memorable document to which may well be applied the words of Isaias: " A standard set up unto the nations."¹⁷

In practical application

In the meantime study and investigation caused Pope Leo's teaching to become widely known throughout the world, and steps were taken to apply it to practical use. In the first place, in a spirit of active beneficence, every effort was made to lift up a class of men, who, owing to the expansion of modern industry, had enormously increased in numbers, but whose rightful position in society had not yet been deter-

¹⁷ ISAIAH, XI, 12.

mined, and who in consequence were the objects of much neglect and contempt. These were the workingmen. In addition, therefore, to their other heavy pastoral duties, the secular and regular clergy, under the guidance of the Bishops began at once the work of popular education and culture to the immense advantage of souls. This constant endeavour to imbue the minds of the workingmen with the Christian spirit, did much to awaken in them at the same time a sense of their true dignity. By keeping clearly before their mind the rights and duties of their position, it rendered them capable of legitimate and genuine progress, and of becoming leaders of their fellows.

From that time onward, the resources of life were provided for in larger measure and more securely. In answer to the appeal of the Pontiff, works of beneficence and charity began to multiply. Under the direction of the Church, and frequently under the guidance of her priests, sprang up further an ever increasing number of new institutions, by which workingmen, craftsmen, husbandmen, wage-earners of every class could give and receive mutual assistance and support.

2—What was done by civil authority

With regard to the civil power, Leo XIII boldly passed beyond the restrictions imposed by Liberalism, and fearlessly proclaimed the doctrine that the civil power is more than the mere guardian of law and order, and that it must strive with all zeal "to make sure that the laws and institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth, should be such as of themselves to realize public

well-being and private prosperity."¹⁸ It is true, indeed, that a just freedom of action should be left to individual citizens and families ; but this principle is only valid, as long as the common good is secure, and no injustice is entailed. The duty of rulers is to protect the community and its various elements ; and in protecting the rights of individuals, they must have special regard for the infirm and needy. " For the richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State ; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. And for this reason wage-earners, since they mostly belong to that class, should be specially cared for and protected by the government."¹⁹

We do not, of course, deny that even before the Encyclical of Leo, some rulers had provided for the more urgent needs of the working classes, and had checked the more flagrant acts of injustice perpetrated against them. But after the Apostolic voice had sounded from the Chair of Peter throughout the world, the leaders of the nations became at last more fully conscious of their obligations, and set to work seriously to promote a broader social policy.

In fact, the Encyclical *Rerum novarum* completely overthrew those tottering tenets of Liberalism which had long hampered effective interference by the government. It prevailed upon the peoples themselves to develop their social policy more intensely and on truer lines, and encouraged the élite among

¹⁸ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 26.

¹⁹ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 29.

Catholics to give such efficacious help and assistance to rulers of the state, that in legislative assemblies they were not infrequently the foremost advocates of the new policy. Furthermore, not a few recent laws dealing with social questions were originally proposed to the suffrages of the people's representatives by ecclesiastics thoroughly imbued with Leo's teaching, who afterwards with watchful care promoted and fostered their execution.

As a result of these steady and tireless efforts, there has arisen a new branch of jurisprudence unknown to earlier times, whose aim is the energetic defence of those sacred rights of the workingman, which proceed from his dignity as a man and as a Christian. These laws concern the soul, the health, the strength, the housing, workshops, wages, dangerous employments, in a word, all that concerns the wage-earners, with particular regard to women and children. Even though these regulations do not agree always and in every detail with the recommendations of Pope Leo, it is none the less certain that much which they contain is strongly suggestive of *Rerum novarum*, to which in large measure must be attributed the improved condition of the workingmen.

3—What was done by the parties concerned

"In the last place," the wise Pontiff pointed out, "employers and workmen may of themselves effect much in the matter we are treating, by means of such organizations as afford opportune aid to those who are in distress, and which draw the two classes more closely together."²⁰ Among these, he attributed prime importance to societies consisting either of

²⁰ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 36.

workmen alone, or of workingmen and employers together. He devotes much space to describing and commending these societies, and expounds with remarkable prudence their nature, reason, and opportunities, their rights, duties, and laws.

The lesson was well timed. For at that period rulers of not a few nations were deeply infected with Liberalism, and regarded such unions of workingmen with disfavour, if not with open hostility. While readily recognizing and patronizing similar corporations amongst other classes, with criminal injustice they denied the innate right of forming associations to those who needed them most for self-protection against oppression by the more powerful. There were even Catholics who viewed with suspicion the efforts of the labouring classes to form such unions, as if they reflected the spirit of Socialistic or revolutionary agitators.

Workingmen's Unions

Worthy of all praise, therefore, are the directions authoritatively promulgated by Leo XIII, which served to break down this opposition and dispel these suspicions. They have a still higher distinction, however : that of encouraging Christian workingmen to form unions according to their several trades, and of teaching them how to do it. Many were thus confirmed in the path of duty, in spite of the vehement attractions of Socialist organizations, which claimed to be the sole defenders and champions of the lowly and oppressed.

The Encyclical *Rerum novarum* declared most appropriately that " these workingmen's associations should be so organized and governed as to furnish

the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at, that is to say, for helping each member to better his condition to the utmost in body, soul, and property"; yet that it is clear "that they must pay special and chief attention to the duties of religion and morality, and that social betterment should have this chiefly in view." For "the foundation of social laws being thus laid in religion, it is not hard to establish the relations of members one to another, in order that they may live together in concord and achieve prosperity."²¹

Eager to carry out to the full the programme of Leo XIII, the clergy and many of the laity devoted themselves everywhere with admirable zeal to the creation of such unions, which in turn became instrumental in building up a body of truly Christian workmen. These happily combined the successful plying of their trade with deep religious convictions; they learned to defend their temporal rights and interests energetically and efficiently, retaining at the same time a due respect for justice and a sincere desire to collaborate with other classes. Thus they prepared the way for a Christian renewal of the whole social life.

These counsels of Leo XIII were reduced to practice differently in different places. In some countries, one and the same association included within its scope all the ends and purposes proposed by him. In others, according as circumstances seemed to counsel or demand, a division of function developed, and various associations were founded. Of these some undertook the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of their members in the hiring of their labour; others

²¹ *Encycl. Rer. um novarum*, §§ 42, 43.

had as their object the provision of mutual help in economic matters ; while others, still, were exclusively concerned with religious and moral duties and pursuits of a similar kind.

The latter method was chiefly used wherever the laws of the country, or peculiar economic conditions, or the lamentable dissension of minds and hearts so prevalent in modern society, or the necessity of uniting forces to combat the growing ranks of revolutionaries, made it impossible for Catholics to form Catholic unions. Under such circumstances, they seem to have no choice but to enrol themselves in neutral trade unions. These, however, should always respect justice and equity, and leave to their Catholic members full freedom to follow the dictates of their conscience, and to obey the precepts of the Church. It belongs to the Bishops to permit Catholic workingmen to join these unions, where they judge that circumstances render it necessary and there appears no danger for religion, observing however the rules and precautions recommended by Our Predecessor of saintly memory, Pius X.²² Among these precautions the first and most important is that side by side with these trade unions, there must always be associations which aim at giving their members a thorough religious and moral training, that these in turn may impart to the labour unions to which they belong the upright spirit which should direct their entire conduct. Thus will these unions exert a beneficent influence far beyond the ranks of their own members.

It must be set to the credit of the Encyclical, that these unions of workingmen have everywhere so

²² Encycl. *Singulari quadam*, September 24, 1912.

flourished, that in our days, though unfortunately still inferior in number to the organizations of Socialists and Communists, they already muster an imposing body of wage-earners able to maintain successfully, both in national and international assemblies, the rights and legitimate demands of Catholic labourers, and to assert the saving principles on which Christian society is based.

Organizations among other classes

There is the further fact that the doctrine concerning the innate right of forming unions, which Leo XIII treated so learnedly and defended so bravely, began to find ready application to corporations other than those of workingmen. It would seem therefore that the Encyclical is in no small measure responsible for the gratifying increase and spread of associations amongst farmers and others of the humbler classes. These excellent organizations, with others of a similar kind, happily combine economic advantages with mental culture.

Associations of Employers

Associations of employers and captains of industry, which Our Predecessor so earnestly pleaded for, did not meet with the same success ; they are, We regret to say, still few in number. The reason for this must not be entirely attributed to want of good will, but to other and far more serious obstacles, whose nature and gravity We well know and appreciate to the full. There are, however, well-founded hopes that these obstacles also will shortly be removed. We hail even now with deep joy of soul certain experiments, far from negligible,

which have been made in this regard, and which have already produced much fruit and give rich promise for the future.²³

Conclusion : " Rerum Novarum "
the Magna Charta of the social order

These beneficent results of Leo's Encyclical, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, which We have here suggested rather than described, are so many and so great as to prove beyond question that this immortal document exhibits more than a beautiful but merely imaginary picture of human society. We should rather say that Our illustrious Predecessor drew from the Gospel, as from a living and lifegiving source, doctrines capable, if not of settling at once, at least of considerably mitigating, the fatal internal strife which rends the human family. That the good seed, sown with a lavish hand forty years ago, fell in part on good ground, is shown by the rich harvest which, by God's favour, the Church of Christ and the whole human race have reaped unto salvation. It would not be rash to say that during the long years of its usefulness, Leo's Encyclical has proved itself the *Magna Charta*, on which all Christian activities in social matters are ultimately based.

Nevertheless, there are some who seem to attach little importance to this Encyclical and to the present anniversary celebration. These men either slander a doctrine of which they are entirely ignorant ; or, if not unacquainted with this teaching, they betray their failure to understand it ; or else, if they understand it, they lay themselves open to the charge of base injustice and ingratitude.

²³ See letter of the S. Congregation of the Council to the Bishop of Lille, June 5, 1929.

In the course of these years, however, doubts have arisen concerning the correct interpretation of certain passages of the Encyclical, or their inferences, and these doubts have led to controversies, even among Catholics, not always of a peaceful character. On the other hand, the new needs of our age and the changed conditions of society have rendered necessary a more precise application and amplification of Leo's doctrine. We therefore gladly seize this opportunity of answering these doubts, so far as in Us lies, and of satisfying the demands of the present day. This We do in virtue of Our Apostolic office, by which We are a debtor to all.²⁴

II

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SPHERES

But before proceeding to discuss these problems, We lay down the principle, long since clearly established by Leo XIII, that it is Our right and Our duty to deal authoritatively with social and economic problems.²⁵ It is not, of course, the office of the Church to lead men to transient and perishable happiness only, but to that which is eternal; indeed, "the Church believes that it would be wrong for her to interfere without just cause in such earthly concerns."²⁶ But she never can relinquish her God-given task of interposing her authority, not indeed in technical matters, for which she has neither the equipment nor the mission, but in all those that have a bearing on moral conduct. For the deposit of truth entrusted to Us by God, and Our weighty office of propagating, interpreting, and urging,

²⁴ *Rom.*, I, 14.

²⁵ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 13.

²⁶ *Encycl. Ubi Arcano*, December 23, 1922.

in season and out of season, the entire moral law, demand that both social and economic questions be brought within Our supreme jurisdiction, in so far as they refer to moral issues.

For though economic science and moral discipline are guided each by its own principles in its own sphere, it is false that the two orders are so distinct and alien that the former in no way depends on the latter. The so-called laws of economics, derived from the nature of earthly goods and from the qualities of the human body and soul, determine what aims are unattainable or attainable in economic matters, and what means are thereby necessary ; while reason itself clearly deduces from the nature of things and from the individual and social character of man, what is the end and object of the whole economic order assigned by God the Creator.

For it is the moral law alone which commands us to seek in all our conduct our supreme and final end, and to strive directly in our specific actions for those ends which nature, or rather, the Author of nature has established for them, duly subordinating the particular to the general. If this law be faithfully obeyed, the result will be that particular economic aims, whether of society as a body or of individuals, will be intimately linked with the universal teleological order, and as a consequence we shall be led by progressive stages to the final end of all, God Himself, our highest and lasting good.

1—The right of property

Descending now to details, We commence with ownership, or the right of property. You are aware, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, how strenu-

ously Our Predecessor of happy memory defended the right of property against the teachings of the Socialists of his time, showing that the abolition of private ownership would prove to be, not beneficial, but grievously harmful to the working classes. Yet since there are some who falsely and unjustly accuse the Supreme Pontiff and the Church as upholding, both then and now, the wealthier classes against the proletariat, and since controversy has arisen among Catholics as to the true sense of Pope Leo's teaching, We have thought it well to defend from calumny the Leonine doctrine in this matter, which is also the Catholic doctrine, and to safeguard it against false interpretations.

Its individual and social character

First, let it be made clear beyond all doubt that neither Leo XIII, nor those theologians who have taught under the guidance and direction of the Church, have ever denied or called in question the twofold aspect of ownership, which is individual or social according as it regards individuals or concerns the common good. Their unanimous contention has always been that the right to own private property has been given to man by nature, or rather by the Creator Himself, not only in order that individuals may be able to provide for their own needs and those of their families, but also that by means of it, the goods which the Creator has destined for the human race may truly serve this purpose. Now these ends cannot be secured, unless some definite and stable order is maintained.

There is therefore a double danger to be avoided. On the one hand, if the social and public aspect of

ownership be denied or minimized; the logical consequence is "individualism," as it is called; on the other hand, the rejection or diminution of its private and individual character necessarily leads to some form of "collectivism." To disregard these dangers would be to rush headlong into the quicksands of modernism in the moral, juridical, and social order, which We condemned in the Encyclical Letter issued at the beginning of Our Pontificate.²⁷ Let this be noted particularly by those seekers after novelties, who launch against the Church the odious calumny that she has allowed a pagan concept of ownership to creep into the teachings of her theologians, and that another concept must be substituted, which in their astounding ignorance they call Christian.

The obligations of ownership

That We may keep within bounds the controversies which have arisen concerning ownership and the duties attaching to it, We reassert in the first place the fundamental principle, laid down by Leo XIII, that the right of property must be distinguished from its use.²⁸ It belongs to what is called commutative justice, faithfully to respect the possessions of others, not encroaching on the rights of another and thus exceeding one's rights of ownership. The putting of one's own possessions to proper use, however, does not fall under this form of justice, but under certain other virtues; and therefore it is "a duty not enforced by courts of justice."²⁹ Hence it is idle to contend that the right of ownership and its proper use are bounded

²⁷ Encycl. *Ubi Arcano*, December 23, 1922.

²⁸ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 19.

²⁹ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 19.

by the same limits ; and it is even less true that the very misuse or even the non-use of ownership destroys or forfeits the right itself.

Most helpful therefore and worthy of all praise are the efforts of those who, in a spirit of harmony and with due regard for the traditions of the Church, seek to determine the precise nature of these duties, and to define the boundaries imposed by the requirements of social life upon the right of ownership itself or upon its use. On the contrary, it is a grievous error so to weaken the individual character of ownership, as actually to destroy it.

The power of the State

It follows from the twofold character of ownership which We have termed individual and social, that men must take into account in this matter, not only their own advantage, but also the common good. To define in detail these duties, when the need occurs and when the natural law does not do so, is the function of the Government. Provided that the natural and divine law be observed, the public authority, in view of the common good, may specify more accurately what is licit and what is illicit for property-owners in the use of their possessions. Moreover, Leo XIII had wisely taught that " the defining of private possession has been left by God to man's own industry and to the laws of individual peoples."³⁰ History proves that the right of ownership, like other elements of social life, is not absolutely rigid, and this doctrine We Ourselves have given utterance to on a previous occasion in the following terms: " How varied are the forms which the right of property has assumed !

³⁰ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 7.

First the primitive form in use amongst rude and savage peoples, which still exists in certain localities even in our own day ; then that of the patriarchal age ; later came various tyrannical types (We use the word in its classical meaning) ; finally, the feudal and monarchic systems down to the varieties of more recent times."³¹ It is plain, however, that the State may not discharge this duty in an arbitrary manner. Man's natural right of possessing and transmitting property by inheritance must remain intact and cannot be taken away by the State ; "for man precedes the State"³² and, "the domestic household is antecedent, as well in idea as in fact, to the gathering of men into a community."³³ Hence the prudent Pontiff had already declared it unlawful for the State to exhaust the means of individuals by crushing taxes and tributes. "The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man ; and the State has by no means the right to abolish it, but only to control its use and bring it into harmony with the interests of the public good."³⁴ However, when civil authority adjusts ownership to meet the needs of the public good, it acts not as an enemy, but as the friend of private owners ; for thus it effectively prevents the possession of private property, intended by nature's Author in His Wisdom for the sustaining of human life, from creating intolerable burdens and so rushing to its own destruction. It does not therefore abolish, but protects private ownership ; and far from weakening the right of private property, it gives it new strength.

³¹ Allocution to the A. C. I., May 16, 1926.

³² *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 6.

³³ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 10.

³⁴ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 35.

Obligations regarding superfluous income

At the same time a man's superfluous income is not left entirely to his own discretion. We speak of that portion of his income which he does not need in order to live as becomes his station. On the contrary, the grave obligations of charity, beneficence, and liberality which rest upon the wealthy, is constantly insisted upon in telling words by Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.

However, the investment of superfluous income in securing favourable opportunities for employment, provided the labour employed produces results which are really useful, is to be considered, according to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor,³⁵ an act of real liberality, particularly appropriate to the needs of our time.

Titles in acquiring ownership

The original acquisition of property takes place by first occupation and by industry, or, as it is called, specification. This is the universal teaching of tradition and the doctrine of Our Predecessor. Despite unreasonable assertions to the contrary, no wrong is done to any man by the occupation of goods, unclaimed and which belong to nobody. The only form of labour, however, which gives the workingman a title to its fruits, is that which a man exercises as his own master, and by which some new form or new value is produced.

2—Capital and Labour

Altogether different is the labour one man hires out to another, and which is expended on the property of another. To it apply appositely the words of Leo

³⁵ S. THOMAS 2. 2. q. 134.

XIII : " It is only by the labour of workingmen that States grow rich."³⁶ Is it not indeed apparent that the huge possessions which constitute human wealth are begotten by and flow from the hands of the workingman, toiling either unaided or with the assistance of tools and machinery which wonderfully intensify his efficiency ? Universal experience teaches us that no nation has ever yet risen from want and poverty to a better and loftier station without the unremitting toil of all its citizens, both employers and employed. But it is no less self-evident that these ceaseless labours would have remained ineffective, indeed could never have been attempted, had not God, the Creator of all things, in His goodness bestowed in the first instance the wealth and resources of nature, its treasures and its powers. For what else is work but the application of one's forces of soul and body to these gifts of nature, or the development of one's powers by their means ? Now, the natural law, or rather, God's will manifested by it, demands that right order be observed in the application of natural resources to human needs ; and this order consists in everything having its proper owner. Hence it follows that unless a man apply his labour to his own property, an alliance must be formed between his toil and his neighbour's property ; for each is helpless without the other. This was what Leo XIII had in mind when he wrote : " Capital cannot do without Labour, nor Labour without Capital."³⁷ It is therefore entirely false to ascribe the results of their combined efforts to either party alone ; and it is flagrantly unjust that either should deny the efficacy of the other, and seize all the profits.

³⁶ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 27.

³⁷ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 15.

Unjust claims of Capital

Capital, however, was long able to appropriate to itself excessive advantages ; it claimed all the products and profits, and left to the labourer the barest minimum necessary to repair his strength and to ensure the continuation of his class. For by an inexorable economic law, it was held, all accumulation of riches must fall to the share of the wealthy, while the workingman must remain perpetually in indigence or reduced to the minimum needed for existence. It is true that the actual state of things was not always and everywhere as deplorable as the liberalistic tenets of the so-called Manchester school might lead us to conclude ; but it cannot be denied that a steady drift of economic and social tendencies was in this direction. These false opinions and specious axioms were vehemently attacked, as was to be expected, and by others also than merely those whom such principles deprived of their innate right to better their condition.

Unjust claims of Labour

The cause of the harrassed workingman was espoused by the "intellectuals," as they are called, who set up in opposition to this fictitious law another equally false moral principle : that all products and profits, excepting those required to repair and replace invested capital, belong by every right to the workingman. This error, more subtle than that of the Socialists, who hold that all means of production should be transferred to the State (or, as they term it, socialized), is for that reason more dangerous and apt to deceive the unwary. It is an alluring poison, consumed with avidity by many not deceived by open Socialism.

Principle of just distribution

To prevent erroneous doctrines of this kind from blocking the path of justice and peace, the advocates of these opinions should have hearkened to the wise words of Our Predecessor: "The earth, even though apportioned amongst private owners, ceases not thereby to minister to the needs of all."³⁸ This teaching We Ourselves have re-affirmed above, when We wrote that the division of goods, which is effected by private ownership, is ordained by nature itself, and has for its purpose that created things may minister to man's needs in an orderly and stable fashion. These principles must be constantly borne in mind, if we would not wander from the path of truth.

Now, not every kind of distribution of wealth and property amongst men is such that it can at all, and still less can adequately, attain the end intended by God. Wealth therefore, which is constantly being augmented by social and economic progress, must be so distributed amongst the various individuals and classes of society, that the common good of all, of which Leo XIII spoke, be thereby promoted. In other words, the good of the whole community must be safeguarded. By these principles of social justice, one class is forbidden to exclude the other from a share in the profits. This sacred law is violated by an irresponsible wealthy class who, in the excess of their good fortune, deem it a just state of things that they should receive everything and the labourer nothing; it is violated also by a propertyless wage-earning class who demand for themselves all the fruits of production,

³⁸ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 7.

as being the work of their hands. Such men, vehemently incensed against the violation of justice by capitalists, go too far in vindicating the one right of which they are conscious ; they attack and seek to abolish all forms of ownership and all profits not obtained by labour, whatever be their nature or significance in human society, for the sole reason that they are not acquired by toil. In this connection it must be noted that the appeal made by some to the words of the Apostle : " If any man will not work, neither let him eat,"³⁹ is as inept as it is unfounded. The Apostle is here passing judgment on those who refuse to work though they could and ought to do so ; he admonishes us to use diligently our time and our powers of body and mind, and not to become burdensome to others as long as we are able to provide for ourselves. In no sense does he teach that labour is the sole title which gives a right to a living or to profits.⁴⁰

Each class, then, must receive its due share, and the distribution of created goods must be brought into conformity with the demands of the common good and social justice. For every sincere observer is conscious that the vast differences between the few who hold excessive wealth and the many who live in destitution constitute a grave evil in modern society.

3—The uplifting of the proletariat

This is the aim which Our Predecessor urged as the necessary object of Our efforts : the uplifting of the proletariat. It calls for more emphatic assertion and

³⁹ *II Thess.*, 3, 10.

⁴⁰ *II Thess.*, 3, 8, 10.

more insistent repetition on the present occasion, because these salutary injunctions of the Pontiff have not infrequently been forgotten, deliberately ignored, or deemed impracticable, though they were both feasible and imperative. They have lost none of their force or wisdom for our own age, even though the horrible "pauperism" of the days of Leo XIII is less prevalent to-day. The condition of the workingman has indeed been improved and rendered more equitable in many respects, particularly in the larger and more civilized States, where the labouring class can no longer be said to be universally in misery and want. But after modern machinery and modern industry had progressed with astonishing speed and taken possession of many newly colonized countries no less than of the ancient civilizations of the Far East, the number of the dispossessed labouring masses, whose groans mount to heaven from these lands, increased beyond all measure. Moreover, there is the immense army of hired rural labourers, whose condition is depressed in the extreme, and who have no hope of ever obtaining a share in the land.⁴¹ These too, unless efficacious remedies be applied, will remain perpetually sunk in their proletarian condition.

It is true that there is a formal difference between pauperism and proletarianism; nevertheless, the immense number of propertyless wage-earners on the one hand, and the superabundant riches of the fortunate few on the other, is an unanswerable argument that the earthly goods so abundantly produced in this age of industrialism are far from rightly distributed and equitably shared among the various classes of men.

⁴¹ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 35.

Proletarian conditions to be overcome by letting wage-earners attain to property

Every effort therefore must be made that at least in future a just share only of the fruits of production be permitted to accumulate in the hands of the wealthy, and that an ample sufficiency be supplied to the workingmen. The purpose is not that these become slack at their work, for man is born to labour as the bird to fly, but that by thrift they may increase their possessions and by the prudent management of the same may be enabled to bear the family burden with greater ease and security, being freed from that hand-to-mouth uncertainty, which is the lot of the proletarian. Thus they will not only be in a position to support life's changing fortunes, but will also have the reassuring confidence that, when their own lives are ended, some little provision will remain for those whom they leave behind them.

These ideas were not merely suggested, but stated in frank and open terms by Our Predecessor. We emphasize them with renewed insistence in this present Encyclical; for unless serious attempts be made, with all energy and without delay to put them into practice, let nobody persuade himself that the peace and tranquillity of human society can be effectively defended against the forces of revolution.

4—A just wage

This programme cannot, however, be realized unless the propertyless wage-earner be placed in such circumstances that by skill and thrift he can acquire a certain moderate ownership, as was already declared by Us, following the footsteps of Our Predecessor. But how can he ever save money except from his

wages and by living sparingly, who has nothing but his labour by which to obtain food and the necessities of life? Let us turn, therefore, to the question of wage, which Leo XIII held to be "of great importance,"⁴² stating and explaining where necessary its principles and precepts.

Wage-contract not essentially unjust

And first of all, those who hold that the wage-contract is essentially unjust, and that in its place must be introduced the contract of partnership, are certainly in error. They do a grave injury to Our Predecessor, whose Encyclical not only admits this contract, but devotes much space to its determination according to the principles of justice.

In the present state of human society, however, We deem it advisable that the wage-contract should, when possible, be modified somewhat by a contract of partnership, as is already being tried in various ways to the no small gain both of the wage-earners and of the employers. In this way wage-earners are made sharers in some sort in the ownership, or the management, or the profits.

In estimating a just wage, not one consideration alone but many must be taken into account, according to the wise words of Leo XIII: "Before deciding whether wages are fair, many things have to be considered."⁴³

In this way he refuted the irresponsible view of certain writers, who declare that this momentous question can easily be solved by the application of a single principle, and that not even a true one.

⁴² *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 34.

⁴³ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 17.

Entirely false is the principle, widely propagated today, that the worth of labour and therefore the equitable return to be made for it, should equal the worth of its net result. Thus the right to the full product of his toil is claimed for the wage-earner. How erroneous this is appears from what We have written above concerning Capital and Labour.

Individual and social character of labour

The obvious truth is that in labour, especially hired labour, as in ownership, there is a social as well as a personal or individual aspect to be considered. For unless human society forms a truly social and organic body; unless labour be protected in the social and juridical order; unless the various forms of human endeavour, dependent one upon the other, are united in mutual harmony and mutual support; unless above all, brains, capital and labour combine together for common effort, man's toil cannot produce due fruit. Hence if the social and individual character of labour be overlooked, it can be neither equitably appraised nor properly recompensed according to strict justice.

Three points to be considered :

From this double aspect, growing out of the very notion of human labour, follow important conclusions for the regulation and fixing of wages.

(a) Support of the workingman and his family

In the first place, the wage paid to the workingman must be sufficient for the support of himself and of his family.⁴⁴ It is right indeed that the rest of the family contribute according to their power towards the common maintenance, as in the rural home or in

⁴⁴ *Encycl. Casti Connubii*, December 31, 1930.

the families of many artisans and small shopkeepers. But it is wrong to abuse the tender years of children or the weakness of woman. Mothers will above all devote their work to the home and the things connected with it. Intolerable and to be opposed with all our strength, is the abuse whereby mothers of families, because of the insufficiency of the father's salary, are forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the domestic walls, to the neglect of their own proper cares and duties, particularly the education of their children.

Every effort must therefore be made that fathers of families receive a wage sufficient to meet adequately ordinary domestic needs. If in the present state of society this is not always feasible, social justice demands that reforms be introduced without delay which will guarantee every adult workingman just such a wage. In this connection We might utter a word of praise for various systems devised and attempted in practice, by which an increased wage is paid in view of increased family burdens, and a special provision is made for special needs.

(b) The state of the business

The condition of any particular business and of its owner must also come into question in settling the scale of wages; for it is unjust to demand wages so high that an employer cannot pay them without ruin, and without consequent distress amongst the working people themselves. If the business make smaller profit on account of bad management, want of enterprise, or out-of-date methods, this is not a just reason for reducing the workingmen's wages. If, however, the business does not make enough

money to pay the workman a just wage, either because it is overwhelmed with unjust burdens, or because it is compelled to sell its products at an unjustly low price, those who thus injure it are guilty of grievous wrong ; for it is they who deprive the workingmen of the just wage, and force them to accept lower terms.

Let employers, therefore, and employed join in their plans and efforts to overcome all difficulties and obstacles, and let them be aided in this wholesome endeavour by the wise measures of the public authority. In the last extreme, counsel must be taken whether the business can continue, or whether some other provision should be made for the workers. The guiding spirit in this crucial decision should be one of mutual understanding and Christian harmony between employers and workers.

(c) The Exigencies of the common good

Finally the wage-scale must be regulated with a view to the economic welfare of the whole people. We have already shown how conducive it is to the common good that wage-earners of all kinds be enabled by economizing that portion of their wage which remains after necessary expenses have been met, to attain to the possession of a certain modest fortune. Another point, however, of no less importance must not be overlooked, in these our days especially, namely that opportunities for work be provided for those who are willing and able to work. This depends in large measure upon the scale of wages, which multiplies opportunities for work as long as it remains within proper limits, and reduces them if allowed to pass these limits. All are aware that a scale of wages

too low, no less than a scale excessively high, causes unemployment. Now, unemployment, particularly if widespread and of long duration, as We have been forced to experience it during Our Pontificate, is a dreadful scourge ; it causes misery and temptation to the labourer, ruins the prosperity of nations, and endangers public order, peace, and tranquillity the world over. To lower or raise wages unduly, with a view to private profit, and with no consideration for the common good, is contrary to social justice which demands that by union of effort and good will such a scale of wages be set up, if possible, as to offer to the greatest number opportunities of employment and of securing for themselves suitable means of livelihood.

A reasonable relationship between different wages here enters into consideration. Intimately connected with this is a reasonable relationship between the prices obtained for the products of the various economic groups : agrarian, industrial, etc. Where this harmonious proportion is kept, man's various economic activities combine and unite into one single organism and become members of a common body, lending each other mutual help and service. For then only will the economic and social organism be soundly established and attain its end, when it secures for all and each those goods which the wealth and resources of nature, technical achievement, and the social organization of economic affairs can give. These goods should be sufficient to supply all needs and an honest livelihood, and to uplift men to that higher level of prosperity and culture which, provided it be used with prudence, is not only no hindrance but is of singular help to virtue.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Cf. S. THOMAS, *De Regimine Principum*, I, 15. *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 27.

5—The reconstruction of the Social Order

What We have written thus far regarding a right distribution of property and a just scale of wages is concerned directly with the individual, and deals only indirectly with the social order. To this latter, however, Our Predecessor Leo XIII devoted special thought and care, in his efforts to reconstruct and perfect it according to the principles of sound philosophy and the sublime precepts of the Gospel.

A happy beginning has here been made. But in order that what has been well begun may be rendered stable, that what has not yet been accomplished may now be achieved, and that still richer and brighter blessings may descend upon mankind, two things are particularly necessary : the reform of the social order and the correction of morals.

When We speak of the reform of the social order it is principally the State We have in mind. Not indeed that all salvation is to be hoped from its intervention ; but because on account of the evil of "individualism," as We called it, things have come to such a pass that the highly developed social life, which once flourished in a variety of prosperous institutions organically linked with each other, has been damaged and all but ruined, leaving thus virtually only individuals and the State. Social life lost entirely its organic form ; the State which now was encumbered with all the burdens once borne by associations rendered extinct by it, was in consequence submerged and overwhelmed by an infinity of affairs and duties.

It is indeed true, as history clearly proves, that owing to the change in social conditions, much that was formerly done by small bodies can nowadays be accomplished only by large corporations. None

the less, just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to the community at large what private enterprise and industry can accomplish, so too it is an injustice, a grave evil and a disturbance of right order for a larger and higher organization to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies. This is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, unshaken and unchangeable, and it retains its full truth to-day. Of its very nature the true aim of all social activity should be to help individual members of the social body, but never to destroy or absorb them.

The State should leave to these smaller groups the settlement of business of minor importance ; it will thus carry out with greater freedom, power, and success the tasks belonging to it, because it alone can effectively accomplish these, directing, watching, stimulating and restraining, as circumstances suggest or necessity demands. Let those in power, therefore, be convinced that the more faithfully this principle be followed, and a graded hierarchical order exist between the various subsidiary organizations, the more excellent will be both the authority and the efficiency of the social organization as a whole, and the happier and more prosperous the condition of the State.

Harmony between ranks in society

Now this is the primary duty of the State and of all good citizens, to abolish conflict between classes with divergent interests, and thus foster and promote harmony between the various ranks of society.

The aim of social legislation must therefore be the re-establishment of vocational groups. Society today

still remains in a strained and therefore unstable and uncertain state, being founded on classes with contradictory interests and hence opposed to each other, and consequently prone to enmity and strife. Labour, indeed, as has been well said by Our Predecessor in his Encyclical,⁴⁶ is not a mere chattel, since the human dignity of the workingman must be recognized in it, and consequently it cannot be bought and sold like any piece of merchandise. None the less the demand and supply of labour divides men on the labour-market into two classes, as into two camps, and the bargaining between these parties transforms this labour-market into an arena where the two armies are engaged in combat. To this grave disorder which is leading society to ruin, a remedy must evidently be applied as speedily as possible. But there cannot be question of any perfect cure, except this opposition be done away with, and well-ordered members of the social body come into being anew, vocational groups namely, binding men together not according to the position they occupy in the labour-market, but according to the diverse functions which they exercise in society. For as nature induces those who dwell in close proximity to unite into municipalities, so those who practise the same trade or profession, economic or otherwise, combine into vocational groups. These groups, in a true sense autonomous, are considered by many to be, if not essential to civil society, at least its natural and spontaneous development.

Order, as the Angelic Doctor well defines,⁴⁷ is unity arising from the apt arrangement of a plurality of objects ; hence, true and genuine social order demands

⁴⁶ Encycl. *Rerum novarum*, § 16.

⁴⁷ ST. THOMAS, *Cont. Gent.* III, 71 ; cf. *Summ. Theol.*, I, q. 65, a. 2 i.c.

various members of society, joined together by a common bond. Such a bond of union is provided on the one hand by the common effort of employers and employees of one and the same group joining forces to produce goods or give service ; on the other hand, by the common good which all groups should unite to promote, each in its own sphere, with friendly harmony. Now this union will become powerful and efficacious in proportion to the fidelity with which the individuals and the groups strive to discharge their professional duties and to excel in them.

From this it is easy to conclude that in these associations the common interests of the whole group must predominate ; and among these interests the most important is the directing of the activities of the group to the common good. Regarding cases in which interests of employers and employees call for special care and protection against opposing interests, separate deliberation will take place in their respective assemblies and separate votes will be taken as the matter may require.

It is hardly necessary to note that what Leo XIII taught concerning the form of political government, can, in due measure, be applied also to vocational groups. Here, too, men may choose whatever form they please, provided that both justice and the common good be taken into account.⁴⁸

Just as the citizens of the same municipality are wont to form associations with diverse aims, which various individuals are free to join or not, similarly, those who are engaged in the same trade or profession will form free associations among themselves, for

⁴⁸ *Encycl. Immortale Dei*, November 1, 1895.

purposes connected with their occupations. Our Predecessor has explained clearly and lucidly the nature of these free associations. We are content, therefore, to emphasize this one point: Not only is man free to institute these unions which are of a private character, but he has "the further right to adopt such organization and such rules as may best conduce to the attainment of their respective objects."⁴⁹ The same liberty must be claimed for the founding of associations which extend beyond the limits of a single trade. Let those free associations which already flourish and produce salutary fruits make it the goal of their endeavours, in accordance with Christian social doctrine, to prepare the way and to do their part towards the realization of that ideal type of vocational groups which We have mentioned above.

The restoration of the true guiding principle of economics

Still another aim, intimately connected with the preceding, must be kept in view. Just as the unity of human society cannot be built upon class-warfare, so the proper ordering of economic affairs cannot be left to free competition alone. From this source have proceeded in the past all the errors of the "individualistic" school. This school, ignorant or forgetful of the social and moral aspect of economic matters, teaches that the State should refrain in theory and practice from interfering therein, because these possess in free competition and open markets a principle of self-direction better able to control them than any created intellect. Free competition, however, though within certain limits just and productive of good results;

⁴⁹ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 42.

cannot be the ruling principle of the economic world; this has been abundantly proved by the consequences that have followed from the free rein given to these dangerous individualistic ideals. It is therefore very necessary that economic affairs be once more subjected to, and governed by, a true and effective guiding principle. Still less can this function be exercised by the economic supremacy which within recent times has taken the place of free competition; for this is a headstrong and vehement power, which, if it is to prove beneficial to mankind, needs to be curbed strongly and ruled with prudence. It cannot, however, be curbed and governed by itself. More lofty and noble principles must therefore be sought in order to control this supremacy sternly and uncompromisingly; to wit, social justice and social charity. To that end all the institutions of public and social life must be imbued with the spirit of justice; and this justice must above all be truly operative, must build up a juridical and social order able to pervade all economic activity. Social charity should be, as it were, the soul of this order and the duty of the State will be to protect and defend it effectively. This task it will perform the more readily, if it free itself from those burdens which, as we have already declared, are not properly its own.

Further, it would be well if the various nations in common counsel and endeavour strove to promote a healthy economic co-operation by prudent pacts and institutions, since in economic matters they are largely dependent one upon the other, and need one another's help.

^ If then the members of the social body be thus

reformed, and if the true directive principle of social and economic activity be thus re-established, it will be possible to say, in a sense, of this body what the Apostle said of the mystical body of Christ: "The whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity."⁵⁰

Within recent times, as all are aware, a special syndical and corporative organization has been inaugurated which, in view of the subject of the present Encyclical, demands of Us some mention and opportune comment.

The State here grants legal recognition to the syndicate or union, and thereby confers on it some of the features of a monopoly, for, in virtue of this recognition, it alone can represent respectively workingmen and employers, and it alone can conclude labour contracts and labour agreements. Affiliation to the syndicate is optional for everyone; but in this sense only can the syndical organization be said to be free, since the contribution to the union and other special taxes are obligatory for all who belong to a given branch, whether workingmen or employers, and the labour-contracts drawn up by the legal syndicate are likewise obligatory. It is true that it has been authoritatively declared that the legal syndicate does not exclude the existence of unrecognized trade associations.

The corporations are composed of representatives of the unions of workingmen and employers of the same trade or profession, and, as true and genuine organs and institutions of the State, they direct and

⁵⁰ *Eph.*, IV, 16.

coordinate the activities of the unions in all matters of common interest.

Strikes and lock-outs are forbidden. If the contending parties cannot come to an agreement, public authority intervenes.

Little reflection is required to perceive the advantage of the institution thus summarily described : peaceful collaboration of the classes, repression of Socialist organizations and efforts, the moderating influence of a special ministry.

But in order to overlook nothing in a matter of such importance, and in the light of the general principles stated above, as well as of that which We are now about to formulate, We feel bound to add that to Our knowledge there are some who fear that the State is substituting itself in the place of private initiative, instead of limiting itself to necessary and sufficient help and assistance. It is feared that the new syndical and corporative institution possesses an excessively bureaucratic and political character, and that, notwithstanding the general advantages referred to above, it risks serving particular political aims rather than contributing to the initiation of a better social order.

We believe that to attain this last named lofty purpose for the true and permanent advantage of the commonwealth, there is need before and above all else of the blessing of God, and in the second place of the cooperation of all men of good will. We believe, moreover, as a necessary consequence, that the end intended will be the more certainly attained, the greater the contribution furnished by men of technical, commercial, and social competence, and, more still, by Catholic principles and their application.

We look for this contribution, not to Catholic Action (which has no intention of displaying any strictly syndical or political activities), but to Our sons, whom Catholic Action imbues with these principles and trains for the apostolate under the guidance and direction of the Church—of the Church, We say, which in the above-mentioned sphere, as in all others where moral questions are discussed and regulated, cannot forget or neglect its mandate as custodian and teacher, given it by God.

However, all that We have taught about reconstructing and perfecting the social order will be of no avail without a reform of manners; of this, history affords the clearest evidence. At one period there existed a social order which, though by no means perfect in every respect, corresponded nevertheless in a certain measure to right reason according to the needs and conditions of the times. That this order has long since perished is not due to the fact that it was incapable of development and adaptation to changing needs and circumstances, but rather to the wrong-doing of men. Men were hardened in excessive self-love and refused to extend that order, as was their duty, to the increasing numbers of the people; or else, deceived by the attractions of false liberty and other errors, they grew impatient of every restraint and endeavoured to throw off all authority.

It remains for Us then to turn our attention to the actual condition of the economic order and to its bitterest adversary and accuser—We mean Socialism. On these We shall pronounce a frank and just sentence; shall examine more closely the root of the present grave evils; and shall indicate the first and most necessary remedy, which lies in a reform of morals.

III

CHANGES SINCE LEO XIII

1—The change in economic conditions

Since the time of Leo XIII important changes have taken place both in economic conditions and in regard to Socialism. In the first place it is obvious to all that the entire economic scene has greatly changed. You are aware, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, that Our Predecessor of happy memory had chiefly in mind that economic régime in which were provided by different people the capital and labour jointly needed for production. He described it in a happy phrase: "Capital cannot do without Labour, nor Labour without Capital."⁵¹

Leo XIII's whole demeanour was to adjust this economic régime to the standards of true order; whence it follows that the system itself is not to be condemned. And surely it is not vicious of its very nature; but it violates right order whenever Capital so employs the working or wage-earning classes, as to divert business and economic activity entirely to its own arbitrary will and advantage, without any regard to the human dignity of the workers, the social character of economic life, social justice, and the common good.

It is true that even to-day these economic conditions do not everywhere exist exclusively, for there is another economic system which still embraces a very large and influential group of men. There are, for instance, the agricultural classes, who form the larger portion of the human family, and who find in their occupation the

⁵¹ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 15.

means of obtaining honestly and justly what is needful for their maintenance. This system too has its difficulties and problems, of which Our Predecessor spoke repeatedly in his Encyclical and to which We Ourselves have more than once referred in the present Letter.

But it is the capitalist economic régime that, with the world-wide diffusion of industry, has penetrated everywhere, particularly since the publication of Leo XIII's Encyclical. It has invaded and pervaded the economic and social sphere even of those who live outside its ambit, influencing them, and, as it were, intimately affecting them by its advantages, inconveniences, and vices.

When We turn Our attention, therefore, to the changes which this capitalistic economic order has undergone since the days of Leo XIII, We have regard to the interests, not only of those only who live in countries where "Capital" and industry prevail, but of the whole human race.

Domination has followed from free competition

In the first place, then, it is patent that in our days not alone is wealth accumulated, but immense power and despotic economic domination is concentrated in the hands of a few, and that those few are frequently not the owners, but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, who administer them at their good pleasure.

This power becomes particularly irresistible when exercised by those who, because they hold and control money, are able also to govern credit and determine its allotment, for that reason supplying, so to speak, the life-blood to the entire economic body, and grasp-

ing, as it were, in their hands the very soul of production, so that no one dare breathe against their will.

This accumulation of power, the characteristic note of the modern economic order, is a natural result of limitless free competition, which permits the survival of those only who are the strongest, which often means those who fight most relentlessly, who pay least heed to the dictates of conscience.

This concentration of power has led to a threefold struggle for domination. First, there is the struggle for dictatorship in the economic sphere itself; then the fierce battle to acquire control of the State, so that its resources and authority may be abused in the economic struggles; finally, the clash between States themselves. This latter arises from two causes: because the nations apply their power and political influence, regardless of circumstances, to promote the economic advantages of their citizens; and because, vice versa, economic forces and economic domination are used to decide political controversies between peoples.

Disastrous consequences

You assuredly know, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, and you lament the ultimate consequences of this individualistic spirit in economic affairs. Free competition is dead; economic dictatorship has taken its place. Unbridled ambition for domination has succeeded the desire for gain; the whole economic life has become hard, cruel and relentless in a ghastly measure. Furthermore, the intermingling and scandalous confusion of the duties and offices of civil authority and of economics have produced crying evils and have gone so far as to degrade the majesty of the State. The State which

should be the supreme arbiter, ruling in kingly fashion far above all party contention, intent only upon justice and the common good, has become instead a slave, bound over to the service of human passion and greed. As regards the relations of peoples among themselves, a double stream has issued forth from this one fountain-head : on the one hand, economic Nationalism or even economic Imperialism ; on the other, a not less noxious and detestable Internationalism or international Imperialism in financial affairs, which holds that where a man's fortune is, there is his country.

Remedies

The remedies for these great evils We have exposed in the second part of the present Encyclical, where We explicitly dwelt upon their doctrinal aspect ; it will therefore be sufficient to recall them briefly here. Since the present economic régime is based mainly upon Capital and Labour, it follows that the principles of right reason and Christian social philosophy regarding Capital, Labour and their mutual co-operation, must be accepted in theory and reduced to practice. In the first place, due consideration must be had for the double character, individual and social, of Capital and Labour, in order that the dangers of individualism and of collectivism be avoided. The mutual relations between Capital and Labour must be determined according to the laws of the strictest justice, called commutative justice, supported however by Christian charity. Free competition and still more economic domination must be kept within just and definite limits, and must be brought under the effective control of the public authority, in matters appertaining to

this latter's competence. The public institutions of the nations must be such as to make the whole of human society conform to the common good, i.e., to the standard of social justice. If this is done, the economic system, that most important branch of social life, will necessarily be restored to sanity and right order.

2—The changes in Socialism

Since the days of Leo XIII, Socialism too, the great enemy with which his battles were waged, has undergone profound changes, no less than economics. At that time Socialism could fairly be termed a single system, which defended certain definite and mutually coherent doctrines. Nowadays it has in the main become divided into two opposing, and often bitterly hostile camps, neither of which, however, has abandoned the principle peculiar to Socialism, namely, opposition to the Christian Faith.

(a) The more violent section : Communism

One section of Socialism has undergone approximately the same change through which, as We have described, the capitalistic economic régime has passed ; it has degenerated into Communism. Communism teaches and pursues a twofold aim : merciless class warfare, and complete abolition of private ownership ; and this it does, not in secret and by hidden methods, but openly, frankly, and by every means, even the most violent. To obtain these ends, Communists shrink from nothing and fear nothing ; and when they have attained to power, it is unbelievable, indeed it seems portentous, how cruel and inhuman they

show themselves to be. Evidence for this is the ghastly destruction and ruin with which they have laid waste immense tracts of Eastern Europe and Asia ; while their antagonism and open hostility to Holy Church and to God Himself are, alas, but too well known and proved by their deeds. We do not think it necessary to warn upright and faithful children of the Church against the impious and nefarious character of Communism. But We cannot contemplate without sorrow the heedlessness of those who seem to make light of these imminent dangers, and with stolid indifference allow the propagation far and wide of those doctrines which seek by violence and bloodshed the destruction of all society. Even more severely must be condemned the foolhardiness of those who neglect to remove or modify such conditions as exasperate the minds of the people, and so prepare the way for the overthrow and ruin of the social order.

(b) The more moderate section which has retained the name of Socialism

The other section, which has retained the name of Socialism, is much less radical in its views. Not only does it condemn recourse to physical force ; it even mitigates and moderates to some extent class warfare and the abolition of private property, if it does not reject them entirely. It would seem as if Socialism were afraid of its own principles and of the conclusion drawn therefrom by the Communists, and in consequence were drifting towards the truth which Christian tradition has always held in respect ; for it cannot be denied that its programmes often strikingly approach the just demands of Christian social reformers.

**It recedes somewhat from class war and the
extinction of ownership**

Class warfare, provided it abstains from enmities and mutual hatred, is changing gradually to an honest discussion of differences, based upon the desire of social justice. If this is by no means the blessed social peace which we all long for, it can be and must be an approach towards the mutual co-operation of vocational groups. The war declared against private ownership has also abated more and more in such a way that nowadays it is not really the possession of the means of production which is attacked, but that type of social rulership, which, in violation of all justice has been seized and usurped by the owners of wealth. This rulership in fact belongs, not to the individual owners, but to the State. If these changes continue, it may well come about that gradually the tenets of mitigated Socialism will no longer be different from the programme of those who seek to reform human society according to Christian principles. For it is rightly contended that certain forms of property must be reserved to the State, since they carry with them an opportunity of domination too great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large.

Just demands and desires of this kind contain nothing opposed to Christian truth, nor are they in any sense peculiar to Socialism. Those therefore who look for nothing else, have no reason for becoming Socialists.

The possibility of a middle course

It must not be imagined however that all the Socialist sects or factions which are not Communist

have, in fact or in theory, uniformly returned to this reasonable position. For the most part they do not reject class warfare and the abolition of property, but merely are more moderate in regard to them. Now, when false principles are thus mitigated and in some sense waived, the question arises, or is unwarrantably proposed in certain quarters, whether the principles of Christian truth also could not be somewhat moderated and attenuated, so as to meet Socialism, as it were, halfway upon common ground. Some are enticed by the empty hope of gaining in this way the Socialists to our cause. But such hopes are vain. Those who wish to be apostles amongst the Socialists should preach the Christian truth whole and entire, openly and sincerely, without any connivance with error. If they wish in truth to be heralds of the Gospel, let their endeavour be to convince Socialists that their demands, in so far as they are just, are defended much more cogently by the principles of Christian faith, and are promoted much more efficaciously by the power of Christian charity.

But what if, in questions of class war and private ownership, Socialism were to become so mitigated and amended, that nothing reprehensible could any longer be found in it? Would it by that very fact have laid aside its character of hostility to the Christian religion? This is a question which holds many minds in suspense; and many are the Catholics who, realizing clearly that Christian principles can never be either sacrificed or minimized, seem to be raising their eyes towards the Holy See, and earnestly beseeching Us to decide whether or not this form of Socialism has retracted so far its false doctrines that it can now be accepted without the loss of any Christian principle, and be

baptized into the Church. In Our fatherly solicitude We desire to satisfy these petitions, and We pronounce as follows : Whether Socialism be considered as a doctrine, or as a historical fact, or as a movement, if it really remain Socialism, it cannot be brought into harmony with the dogmas of the Catholic Church, even after it has yielded to truth and justice in the points We have mentioned ; the reason being that it conceives human society in a way utterly alien to Christian truth.

Socialism conceives a society and a social character of men utterly foreign to Christian truth

For according to Christian doctrine, man, endowed with a social nature, is placed here on earth in order that he may spend his life in society, and under an authority ordained by God ; that he may develop and evolve to the full all his faculties to the praise and glory of his Creator ; and that, by fulfilling faithfully the duties of his station, he may attain to temporal and eternal happiness. Socialism, on the contrary, entirely ignorant of or unconcerned about this sublime end both of individuals and of society, affirms that living in community was instituted merely for the sake of the advantages which it brings to mankind.

Goods are produced more efficiently by a suitable distribution of labour than by the scattered efforts of individuals. Hence the Socialists argue that economic production, of which they see only the material side, must necessarily be carried on collectively, and that because of this necessity men must surrender and submit themselves wholly to society with a view to the production of wealth. Indeed, the possession of the greatest possible amount of temporal goods is

esteemed so highly, that man's higher goods, not excepting liberty, must, they claim, be subordinated and even sacrificed to the exigencies of efficient production. They affirm that the loss of human dignity, which results from these socialized methods of production, will be easily compensated for by the abundance of goods produced in common and accruing to the individual, who can turn them at his will to the comforts and culture of life. Society, therefore, as the Socialist conceives it, is on the one hand impossible and unthinkable without the use of compulsion of the most excessive kind; on the other it fosters a false liberty, since in such a scheme no place is found for true social authority, which is not based on temporal and material advantages, but descends from God alone, the Creator and last end of all things.⁵²

Catholic and Socialist are contradictory terms

If, like all errors, Socialism contains a certain element of truth (and this the Sovereign Pontiffs have never denied), it is nevertheless founded upon a doctrine of human society peculiarly its own, which is opposed to true Christianity. "Religious Socialism," "Christian Socialism" are expressions implying a contradiction in terms. No one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist.

Cultural Socialism

All that We have thus far laid down and established by Our sovereign authority bears application also to a certain new Socialist phenomenon, hitherto little known, but nowadays common to many sections of Socialism. Its main aim is the formation of minds

⁵² Encycl. *Divinum illud*, June 29, 1881.

and manners. Under the appearance of friendship, it attracts little children in particular and attaches them to itself, though its activity extends to all the people, to make of them convinced Socialists, upon whom to build society modelled on Socialistic principles.

In Our Encyclical Letter "*Divini illius Magistri*"⁵³ We have expounded at length the true principles on which Christian education rests and the end which it pursues; the contradiction between these and the actions and aims of cultural Socialism is so clear and evident as to require no comment. Nevertheless, the formidable dangers which this form of Socialism brings in its train seem to be ignored or under-estimated by those who are little concerned to resist it with strength and zeal, as the gravity of the situation demands. It is a duty of Our pastoral office to warn these men of the grave danger which threatens. Let all bear in mind that the parent of this cultural Socialism was Liberalism, and that its offspring will be Bolshevism.

Catholic deserters to Socialism

This being so, you can understand, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, with what grief We perceive, in certain countries particularly, not a few of Our children, who, while still preserving, as We are convinced, their true faith and good will, have deserted the camp of the Church and passed over to the ranks of Socialism. Some openly boast of its name and profess Socialistic doctrines; others, either through indifference or even almost in spite of themselves, join associations which, in theory or in fact, are Socialist.

⁵³ Encycl. *Divini illius Magistri*, December 31, 1929

In Our paternal solicitude, therefore, We have meditated and sought to understand what can have been the reason of their going so far astray ; and We seem to hear what many of them allege in excuse : The Church and those professing attachment to the Church favour the rich and neglect workingmen and have no care for them ; they were obliged therefore in their own interest to join the Socialist ranks.

What a lamentable fact, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, that there have been, and that there are even now some who, while professing the Catholic Faith, are well-nigh unmindful of that sublime law of justice and charity which binds us not only to give each man his due, but to succour our brethren as Christ our Lord Himself ; worse still, that there are those who out of greed for gain, do not shame to oppress the workingman. Indeed there are some who even abuse religion itself, cloaking their own unjust impositions under its name, that they may protect themselves against the clearly just demands of their employees. We shall never desist from gravely censuring such conduct. Such men are the cause that the Church, without deserving it, may have the appearance and be accused of taking sides with the wealthy, and of being little moved by the needs and sufferings of the disinherited. That these appearances and these accusations are undeserved and unjust, the whole history of the Church clearly shows ; the very Encyclical, the anniversary of which we are celebrating, affords the clearest evidence that these calumnies and contumelies have been most unfairly cast upon the Church and upon her teaching.

The invitation to return

But We are far indeed from being exasperated by these injustices or dejected by Our pastoral sorrow. We have no wish to drive away or repel Our children who have been so unhappily deceived, and who are wandering so far from the paths of truth and salvation. On the contrary, We invite them with all possible solicitude to return to the maternal bosom of the Church. God grant that they listen to Our voice! God grant that whence they set out, thither they may return, to their Father's house; that where their true place is, there they may remain, amongst the ranks of those who, zealously following directions promulgated by Leo XIII and solemnly repeated by Ourselves, unremittingly endeavour to reform society according to the mind of the Church on a firm basis of social justice and social charity. Let it be their firm persuasion that nowhere, even on earth, can they find an ampler happiness than in company with Him, who being rich became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty we might become rich;⁵⁴ who was poor and in labours from His youth; who invites to Himself all who labour and are burdened, that He may refresh them bounteously in the love of His Heart;⁵⁵ who, in fine, without any respect for persons, will require more of him to whom more has been given,⁵⁶ and will render to every man according to his works.⁵⁷

3—Moral Renovation

However, if we examine matters diligently and thoroughly, we shall perceive clearly that this longed-for social reconstruction must be preceded by a

⁵⁴ *II Cor.*, VIII, 9.

⁵⁵ *Cf. LUKE*, XII, 8

⁵⁶ *Cf. MATT.*, VII, 24.

⁵⁷ *MATT.*, XI, 28.

profound renewal of the Christian spirit, from which multitudes engaged in industry in every country have unhappily departed. Otherwise, all our endeavours will be futile, and our social edifice will be built, not upon a rock, but upon shifting sand.⁵⁸

We have passed in review, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, the state of the modern economic world, and have found it suffering from the greatest evils. We have investigated anew Socialism and Communism, and have found them, even in their mitigated forms, far removed from the precepts of the Gospel.

“And if society is to be healed now”—We use the words of Our Predecessor—“in no way can it be healed save by a return to Christian life and Christian institutions.”⁵⁹ For Christianity alone can apply an efficacious remedy for the excessive solicitude for transitory things, which is the origin of all vices. When men are fascinated and completely absorbed in the things of the world, it alone can draw away their attention and raise it to heaven. And who will deny that this remedy is now urgently needed by society?

**The chief disorder of the modern world : the ruin
of souls**

For most men are affected almost exclusively by temporal upheavals, disasters, and ruins. Yet if we view things with Christian eyes, as we should, what are they all in comparison with the ruin of souls? Nevertheless, it may be said with all truth that nowadays the conditions of social and economic life are such, that vast multitudes of men can only with great difficulty pay attention to that one thing necessary, namely their eternal salvation.

⁵⁸ MATT., XVI, 27.

⁵⁹ *Encycl. Rerum novarum*, § 22.

Constituted Pastor and Protector of these innumerable sheep by the Prince of Pastors who redeemed them by His Blood, We can scarcely restrain Our tears when We reflect upon the dangers which threaten them. Our Pastoral office, moreover, reminds Us to search constantly, with paternal solicitude, for means of coming to their assistance, appealing to the unwearied zeal of others who are bound to this cause by justice and charity. For what will it profit men that a more prudent distribution and use of riches make it possible for them to gain even the whole world, if thereby they suffer the loss of their own souls?⁶⁰ What will it profit to teach them sound principles in economics, if they permit themselves to be so swept away by selfishness, by unbridled and sordid greed, that "hearing the commandments of the Lord, they do all things contrary."⁶¹

The cause of this loss of souls

The fundamental cause of this defection from the Christian law in social and economic matters, and of the apostacy of many workingmen from the Catholic faith which has resulted from it, is the disorderly affection of the soul, a sad consequence of original sin, the source of these and of all other evils. By original sin the marvellous harmony of man's faculties has been so deranged that now he is easily led astray by low desires, and strongly tempted to prefer the transient goods of this world to the lasting goods of heaven. Hence comes that unquenchable thirst for riches and temporal possessions, which at all times has impelled men to break the law of God and trample on the rights

⁶⁰ Cf. MATT., XVI, 26.

⁶¹ Cf. *Judges*, II, 17.

of their neighbour ; but the condition of the economic world to-day lays more snares than ever for human frailty. For the uncertainty of economic conditions and of the whole economic régime demands the keenest and most unceasing straining of energy on the part of those engaged therein ; and as a result, some have become so hardened against the stings of conscience as to hold all means good which enable them to increase their profits, and to safeguard against sudden changes of fortune the wealth amassed by unremitting toil. Easy returns, which an open market offers to any one, lead many to interest themselves in trade and exchange, their one aim being to make clear profits with the least labour. By their unchecked speculation prices are raised and lowered out of mere greed for gain, making void all the most prudent calculations of manufacturers.—The regulations legally enacted for corporations, with their divided responsibility and limited liability, have given occasion to abominable abuses. The greatly weakened accountability makes little impression, as is evident, upon the conscience. The worst injustices and frauds take place beneath the obscurity of the common name of a corporative firm. Boards of Directors proceed in their unconscionable methods even to the violation of their trust in regard to those whose savings they administer.—In the last place must still be mentioned the unscrupulous but well-calculated speculation of men who, without seeking to answer real needs, appeal to the lowest human passions. These are aroused in order to turn their satisfaction into gain.

· A stern insistence on the moral law, enforced with vigour by civil authority, could have dispelled or perhaps averted these enormous evils. This, however,

was too often lamentably wanting. For at the time when the new social order was beginning, the doctrines of rationalism had already taken firm hold of large numbers, and an economic science alien to the true moral law had soon arisen, whence it followed that free rein was given to human avarice.

As a result, a much greater number than ever before, solely concerned with adding to their wealth by any means whatsoever, sought their own selfish interests above all things ; they had no scruple in committing the gravest injustices against others. Those who first entered upon this broad way which leads to destruction,⁶² easily found many imitators of their iniquity because of their manifest success, their extravagant display of wealth, their derision of the scruples of more delicate consciences, and the crushing of more cautious competitors.

With the leaders of business abandoning the true path, it is not surprising that in every country multitudes of workingmen too sank in the same morass ; all the more so, because very many employers treated their workmen as mere tools, without any concern for the welfare of their souls, indeed, without the slightest thought of higher interests. The mind shudders if we consider the frightful perils to which the morals of workers (of boys and young men particularly), and the virtue of girls and women are exposed in modern factories ; if we recall how the present economic régime and above all the disgraceful housing conditions prove obstacles to the family tie and family life ; if we remember the insuperable difficulties placed in the way of a proper observance of the holy days. How universally has the true Christian spirit become impaired,

⁶² Cf. *MATT.*, VII, 13.

which formerly produced such lofty sentiments even in uncultured and illiterate men! In its stead, man's one solicitude is to obtain his daily bread in any way he can. And so bodily labour, which was decreed by Providence for the good of man's body and soul even after original sin, has everywhere been changed into an instrument of strange perversion: for dead matter leaves the factory ennobled and transformed, where men are corrupted and degraded.

The remedies :

(a) Economic life must be inspired by Christian principles

For this pitiable ruin of souls, which, if it continue, will frustrate all efforts to reform society, there can be no other remedy than a frank and sincere return to the teaching of the Gospel. Men must observe anew the precepts of Him who alone has the words of eternal life,⁶³ words which, even though heaven and earth be changed, shall not pass away.⁶⁴ All those versed in social matters demand a rationalization of economic life which will introduce sound and true order. But this order, which We Ourselves desire and make every effort to promote, will necessarily be quite faulty and imperfect, unless all man's activities harmoniously unite to imitate and, as far as is humanly possible, attain the marvellous unity of the Divine plan. This is the perfect order which the Church preaches with intense earnestness, and which right reason demands; which places God as the first and supreme end of all created activity, and regards all created goods as mere instruments under God, to be used only in so far as they help towards the attainment

⁶³ Cf. JOHN, VI, 70.

⁶⁴ Cf. MATT., XXIV, 35.

of our supreme end. Nor is it to be imagined that remunerative occupations are thereby belittled or deemed less consonant with human dignity. On the contrary, we are taught to recognize and reverence in them the manifest will of God the Creator, who placed man upon earth to work it and use it in various ways in order to supply his needs. Those who are engaged in production are not forbidden to increase their fortunes in a lawful and just manner; indeed it is just that he who renders service to society and develops its wealth should himself have his proportionate share of the increased public riches, provided always that he respects the laws of God and the rights of his neighbour, and uses his property in accord with faith and right reason. If these principles be observed by all, everywhere and at all times, not merely the production and acquisition of goods, but also the use of wealth, now so often uncontrolled, will within a short time be brought back again to the standards of equity and just distribution. Mere sordid selfishness, which is the disgrace and the great crime of the present age, will be opposed in very deed by the kindly and forcible law of Christian moderation, whereby man is commanded to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, confiding in God's liberality and definite promise that temporal goods also, in so far as he has need of them, will be added unto him.⁶⁵

(b) The law of charity must operate

Now, in effecting this reform, charity "which is the bond of perfection,"⁶⁶ must play a leading part. How completely deceived are those inconsiderate reformers who, zealous only for commutative justice,

⁶⁵ Cf. *MATT.*, VI, 33.

⁶⁶ *Coloss.*, III, 14.

proudly disdain the help of charity ! Clearly charity cannot take the place of justice unfairly withheld. But, even though a state of things be pictured in which every man receives at last all that is his due, a wide field will nevertheless remain open for charity. For, justice alone, even though most faithfully observed, can remove the cause of social strife, but can never bring about a union of hearts and minds. Yet this union, binding men together, is the main principle of stability in all institutions, no matter how perfect they may seem, which aim at establishing social peace and promoting mutual aid. In its absence, as repeated experience proves, the wisest regulations come to nothing. Then only will it be possible to unite all in harmonious striving for the common good, when all sections of society have the intimate conviction that they are members of a single family and children of the same Heavenly Father, and further, that they are "one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another,"⁶⁷ so that "if one member suffer anything, all members suffer with it."⁶⁸ Then the rich and others in power will change their former negligence of their poorer brethren into solicitous and effective regard ; will listen with kindly feeling to their just complaints, and will readily forgive them the faults and mistakes they possibly make. Workingmen too will lay aside all feelings of hatred or envy, which the instigators of social strife arouse so skilfully. Not only will they cease to feel weary of the position assigned them by divine Providence in human society ; they will become proud of it, well aware that every man by doing his duty is working usefully and honourably for the common good, and is following in the

⁶⁷ *Rom.*, XII, 5.⁶⁸ *I Cor.*, XII, 26.

footsteps of Him, who, being in the form of God, chose to become a carpenter among men, and to be known as the Son of a carpenter.

A difficult task

Because of this new diffusion throughout the world of the Gospel spirit, which is a spirit of Christian moderation and of universal charity, We confidently look forward to that complete and much-desired renewal of human society, and to "The peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ," to which We firmly resolved at the very beginning of Our Pontificate to devote all Our care and all Our pastoral solicitude.⁶⁹ You, Venerable Brethren, who by ordinance of the Holy Spirit rule with Us the Church of God,⁷⁰ are labouring strenuously and with admirable zeal in all parts of the world, not exclusive of the sacred missions among the pagans, towards this same end of capital importance and necessity to-day. Receive your well-deserved meed of praise; and with you all those, of the clergy and laity, whom We rejoice to see daily taking part in this great work and affording valuable help: Our beloved sons devoted to Catholic Action, who with extraordinary zeal aid Us in the solution of social problems, in so far as the Church in virtue of her divine institution has the right and the duty to concern herself with them. With repeated insistence We exhort all these in the Lord to spare no labour and be overcome by no difficulty, but daily more to take courage and be valiant.⁷¹ The task We propose to them is truly difficult, for well do We know that many are the obstacles to be overcome on

69 Encycl. *Ubi arcano*, December 23, 1922.

70 Cf. *Acts*, XX, 28.

71 Cf. *Deut.*, XXXI, 7.

either side, whether amongst the higher classes of society or the lower. Still, let them not lose heart, nor in any way allow themselves to be diverted by any art from their purpose. To face stern combats is the part of a Christian ; and to endure labour is the lot of those, who, as good soldiers of Christ,⁷² follow closely in His footsteps.

Relying therefore solely on the assistance of *Him* who " will have all men be saved,"⁷³ let us devote all our energies to helping those unhappy souls who are turned away from God ; let us withdraw them from the temporal cares in which they are too much involved, and teach them to aspire with confidence to things that are eternal. At times, indeed, this will be easier to accomplish than appears at first sight ; for if in the depths of even the most abandoned hearts, there lurk, like sparks beneath the ashes, spiritual forces of unexpected strength—a clear testimony of a " naturally Christian soul " — how much more then must these abide in the hearts of the many who largely through ignorance and unfavourable surroundings have wandered into error !

For the rest, the associations of the working men themselves provide glad signs of coming social reconstruction. To the great joy of Our heart We discern amongst them dense masses of young workers who listen readily to the call of divine grace and strive with splendid zeal to win their fellows to Christ. No less praise is due to those leaders of workingmen's organizations who, sacrificing their own interests, and anxious only for the good of their companions, strive with prudence to bring their just demands into harmony

⁷² *II Tim.*, II, 3.

⁷³ *I Tim.*, II, 4.

with the prosperity of their entire vocational group, nor by any obstacle or misgiving do they permit themselves to be deterred from this noble task. Further, many young men, destined soon by reason of their talents or their wealth to hold distinguished places in the foremost ranks of society, are studying social problems with growing earnestness. These youths encourage the fairest hopes that they will devote themselves wholly to social reforms.

The course to be followed

Present circumstances therefore, Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children, indicate clearly the course to be followed. Nowadays, as more than once in the history of the Church, We are confronted with a world which in large measure has almost fallen back into paganism. In order to bring back to Christ these whole classes of men who have denied Him, we must gather and train from amongst their very ranks auxiliary soldiers of the Church, men who know their mentality and their aspirations, and who with kindly fraternal charity will be able to win their hearts. Undoubtedly the first and immediate apostles of the workingmen must themselves be workingmen, while the apostles of the industrial and commercial world should themselves be employers and merchants.

It is your chief duty, Venerable Brethren, and that of your clergy, to seek diligently, to select prudently, and train fittingly these lay apostles, amongst workingmen and amongst employers. No easy task is here imposed upon the clergy, wherefore all candidates for the sacred priesthood must be adequately prepared to meet it by intense study of social matters. It is particularly necessary, however, that they whom you specially select ~~and devote~~ to this work should show

themselves endowed with a keen sense of justice, ready to oppose with real manly constancy unjust claims and unjust actions ; that they avoid every extreme with consummate prudence and discretion ; above all, that they be thoroughly imbued with the charity of Christ, which alone has power to incline men's hearts and wills firmly and gently to the laws of equity and justice. This course, already productive of success in the past, we must follow now with alacrity.

Further, We earnestly exhort in the Lord the beloved sons who are chosen for this task, to devote themselves whole-heartedly to the formation of the men entrusted to them. In the execution of this most priestly and apostolic work, let them make opportune use of the powerful resources of Christian training, by instructing youth, by founding Christian associations, by forming study-circles on Christian lines. Above all, let them hold in high esteem and employ with diligence for the benefit of their disciples the Spiritual Exercises, a most precious means of personal and of social reform, as We said in Our Encyclical "*Mens nostra*." These Exercises We declared in express terms to be most useful for the laity in general and especially for workingmen, and We warmly recommend them ; for in that school of the spirit not only are excellent Christians formed, but real apostles of every state of life are trained and enkindled with the fire of the Heart of Christ. From that school they will go forth, as the Apostles from the Cenacle in Jerusalem, strong in faith, unconquerable in steadfastness under trials, aflame with zeal, eager only for the spread in every way of the Kingdom of Christ.

And in truth, the world has nowadays sore need of valiant soldiers of Christ, who strain every thew and

